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## MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT.

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RICHMOND, VA., April 21, 1863.

*To the House of Representatives :*

I herewith transmit, for your information, communications from the Secretary of War and the Attorney General, in response to your resolution of February 21st, enquiring "whether the Government holds, or has at any time held, itself liable for the value of slaves impressed by its authority and escaping to the enemy while so impressed, and whether the owners of such slaves have been paid."

Whether the liability of the Government shall be extended to such cases is a question to be determined, not by the Executive, but by Congress.

•JEFFERSON DAVIS.

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### COMMUNICATION FROM THE SECRETARY OF WAR.

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA,  
War Department,  
Richmond, Va., April 18, 1863. }

*To the President of the Confederate States :*

SIR: In compliance with a resolution of the House of Representatives requesting to be informed whether the Government holds, or has at any time held, itself liable for the value of slaves impressed by its authority and escaping to the enemy while so impressed, and whether the owners of such slaves have been paid; and also, calling for the correspondence, if any, on the subject between the Secretary of War, the Adjutant General, the Quartermaster General, the Engineer Bureau, and the Attorney General, I have the honor to submit,

1. The copy of an order issued from the office of the Adjutant and Inspector General the 18th March, 1862.

2. A report of the Quartermaster General, enclosing an opinion of the Attorney General.

3. A report of the Chief of the Bureau of Engineers.

There have been a few cases of claim under these orders, some of which have been settled.

The Department, latterly, has doubted whether it was authorized to take such obligations upon itself, and has declined to do so in its correspondence with the Governor of South Carolina relative to an act of the Legislature of that State that imposed a similar obligation upon the Confederate Government for slaves that might be called into the public service. A copy of the correspondence is herewith submitted.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JAMES A. SEDDON,  
*Secretary of War.*

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ADJUTANT AND INSPECTOR GENERAL'S OFFICE, }  
Richmond, March 19, 1862. }

It is necessary for the War Department to impress slaves and free negroes, preferably the latter, for service as teamsters and carpenters in the Quartermaster's Department of the Confederate army. The bearer hereof, Mr. J. A. Clayton, is hereby directed to call upon the citizens of Madison, Green and Albemarle counties, in Virginia, for male slaves or free negroes, between the ages of 16 and 50, for the above purpose to the number of 240. The negroes will be paid for at the rate of \$30 for mechanics, \$20 for teamsters and \$15 for laborers per month each, and receive an ample supply of provisions, the money to be paid by the Quartermaster's Department to their masters promptly at the places where they may work. Payment will be made personally to the free negroes, or to such agents as may be legally authorized by them. The cost of transportation to be paid by the government, the agent will collect the negroes, and a fair compensation will be paid him for the trouble by the Quartermaster's Department.

The agent, Mr. J. A. Clayton, is authorized to give receipts for the negroes, and from the dates of said receipts the government of the Confederate States will be responsible for the slaves according to the laws of Virginia, with the additional responsibility for their value should they escape to or be injured by the enemy.

These negroes will be sent to the nearest wharves or railroad depots, in accordance to instructions to be given by the agent. Cost of transportation will be paid upon the production of evidence signed by the agent, that it has been furnished.

By order of the Secretary of War.

(Signed,)

S. COOPER,  
*Adjutant and Inspector General.*

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WAR DEPARTMENT, }  
*Adjutant and Inspector General's Office,* }  
Richmond, Va., 18th March, 1862. }

It is necessary for the War Department to impress slaves and free negroes to extend and complete the fortifications for the protection of the country.



The citizens of \_\_\_\_\_ county are therefore called upon to send forthwith one-half of their male slaves between the ages of sixteen and fifty, to execute this work on the Peninsula. The negroes will be paid for at the rate of ten dollars per month each, and receive an ample supply of provisions; the money to be paid by the engineer department to their masters promptly, at the places where they may work. Payment will be made personally to the free negroes, or to such agents as may be legally authorized by them; the cost of transportation to be paid by the government. The sheriffs of the counties will collect the free negroes and turn them over to the government agents at any place in the county designated by the latter, and a fair compensation will be allowed the sheriff by the engineer department for his trouble, upon the production by him of a receipt from the agent acknowledging the delivery of the free negroes.

The bearer of this \_\_\_\_\_ is authorized to give receipts for the negroes, slave and free; and from the dates of said receipts the government of the Confederate States will be responsible for the slaves according to the laws of Virginia, with the additional responsibility for their value, should they escape to or be injured by the enemy. These negroes will be sent to the nearest wharves or railroad depots, in accordance with instructions to be given by the agent. Cost of transportation will be paid upon the production of evidence signed by the agent that it has been furnished.

In order to facilitate the collection of the negroes, the government agent may appoint sub-agents from among the owners of slaves in the counties called upon, two of whose negroes will be released as compensation for their labor.

## LETTER FROM THE QUARTERMASTER GENERAL.

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA,  
*Quartermaster General's Office,* }  
 Richmond, April 3, 1863. }

HON. JAMES A. SEDDON,  
*Secretary of War:*

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge your reference to this office of a copy of the following resolution of the House of Representatives, passed February 21, 1863:

“*Resolved*, That the President be requested to inform this House whether the Government holds, or has at any time held, itself responsible for the value of slaves impressed by its authority and escaping to the enemy while so impressed, and whether the owners of such slaves have been paid; also, the correspondence, if any, between the Secretary of War, \* \* \* \* the Quartermaster General, \* \* \* and the Art rney General.”

In response to this resolution, so far as the action of this depart-

ment is involved, I respectfully report that the question of this liability was incidentally raised by a communication, I had the honor to address to the Secretary of War, on the 22d of November, 1861, which was referred to the Attorney General for his opinion, a copy of which is herewith transmitted.

It will be perceived that the Attorney General decided that this question of responsibility was one of policy, which addressed itself to the law-making power alone, and, in the absence of legislation, by Congress. Upon the subject this department has uniformly determined that a responsibility for the value of impressed slaves could not be admitted, and in no instance has the payment of compensation for their loss been authorized.

During the occupation of the Peninsula, the quartermaster of General Magruder's command, acting, it was understood, by his order, advertised for a number of slaves, and offered a guaranty of compensation for their value in case of their loss or capture by the enemy. So soon as this advertisement was brought to my attention, I directed that the proffer of such guaranty should be withdrawn. It is not improbable, however, that in the meantime some slaves were hired under the belief by the owners that in case of their loss or capture by the enemy, the Government would be responsible for their values.

Subsequently, on the 19th of March, 1862, an order from the Adjutant General's office directed a special agent to obtain from the Counties of Madison Greene and Albemarle, in Virginia, a number of slaves for the public service, and authorized him to give receipts for the negroes with the guaranty that "from the date of the receipts the Government of the Confederate States will be responsible for the slaves according to the laws of Virginia, with the additional responsibility for their value should they escape to, or be captured by, the enemy."

I have the honor to transmit copies of that order and of the endorsement thereon, which was submitted by me to the Secretary of War. No special instructions were, however, sent to this office, and in their absence, I have adhered to the course hitherto pursued, and have, in no instance, authorized the payment of the values of slaves hired or impressed by the Government when lost by escape to, or capture by, the enemy.

The foregoing statement comprises all the information afforded by the files of this office in regard to the inquiry contained in the resolution of the House of Representatives.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

A. C. MYERS,  
*Quartermaster General.*



## LETTER OF ATTORNEY GENERAL.

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA, }  
*Department of Justice,* }  
 Richmond, March 14th, 1863. }

MR. PRESIDENT: I have the honor to reply to your letter of the 24th ultimo, calling my attention to a resolution of the House of Representatives, requesting the President to inform the House "whether the government holds, or has at any time held, itself liable for the value of slaves impressed by its authority and escaping to the enemy, while so impressed; and whether the owners of such slaves have been paid; also, the correspondence, if any, on this subject, between the Secretary of War, the Adjutant General, the Quartermaster General, the Engineer Bureau, and the Attorney General."

The only correspondence, between the Attorney General and either of the officers named in the resolution which touches the question presented, is herewith enclosed marked exhibit "A." I have had occasion, in determining the validity of claims, filed in this office, to discuss, in a report, I had the honor to make on the 23d of February to Congress, to express my opinion as to the liability of the Government in one case then before me. I herewith send a copy of that report, marked exhibit "B."

Whether the doctrine therein announced meets your approbation, I do not know. I have investigated the subject with some care, and believe that my opinion is well fortified by an unbroken chain of judicial decisions. There is one view I ought to present, which is not discussed in the report made to Congress. It was unnecessary to discuss it therein, owing to the order from the Adjutant General's office, pledging the government to indemnify the owner of the slave for loss accruing by the escape of the slave. The view is this, although the agents of the government, in making the impressment, (in the absence of a law,) according to strict principles, may be trespassers, yet the reception of hire from the Government for the slave, by the owner, may be considered as a waiver of the trespass. Between individuals, when one commits a trespass on the other's property, this would unquestionably be true. When this waiver is established, the owner of the property could not afterwards hold the other party liable for the original wrongful taking. The trespass would thus be merged into a contract of *hiring*. The ordinary principles, governing bailor and bailee, would then apply. The bailee would not then be responsible for any damage to, or loss of, the property unless such damages or loss could be attributed to some neglect or wrongful act of the bailee. If the escape of the slave to the enemy could not be attributed to want of care, or the neglect or some wrongful act of the bailee, he would not be responsible for such escape. But how far the government would adopt these principles in dealing with its own citizens, when its agents (without any law, authorizing them,) take, impress the slaves, in the first instance, without express or presumed consent of the owner, and afterwards pay the owner hire for the slaves so impressed, is, perhaps, more a question for the legislative than the executive department of

the government. I have not had occasion to express an opinion on the subject in any official capacity.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,  
 T. H. WATTS,  
*Attorney General.*

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[EXHIBIT A.]

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, Richmond, 25th Nov., 1861.

HON. J. P. BENJAMIN,  
*Secretary of War :*

Sir : I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the letter of A. C. Myers, Quartermaster General, addressed to the Secretary of War, accompanied by accounts of W. F. Fitchue, for arresting fugitive slaves, and Captain W. J. Marshall, for bringing the said slaves from the eastern shore of Virginia to Gloucester Point, where they had been in the employment of the government, upon a contract of hiring with the owner, and from which they escaped to the eastern shore. The charge made by Fitchue is the reward allowed by the law of Virginia for the apprehension of fugitive slaves and their delivery to their owner or agent. And that made by Captain Marshall, is what he considers a fair compensation, under the circumstances, for his risk and trouble in returning the slaves to Gloucester Point.

The papers are referred by you to this office, for my opinion, as to the liability of the Government.

It seems to be clear that the government is not legally bound to pay these charges. Legally speaking, it occupies the same relation to the owner of the slaves that any individual hirer would have sustained to him, and in such case, by the local law, an extract of which is given in the letter of the Quartermaster General, the hirer would not be liable. Similar laws doubtless exist in every State of the Confederacy. It may be said, also, that it was in the power of the owner to protect himself by the terms of the contract of hiring.

It is suggested, in the letter of the Quartermaster General, as a subject worthy of consideration, whether as a measure of *policy*, the government should avail itself of the exemption given by law, in this and similar cases. He also refers to cases, likely to arise, of slaves impressed into the public service by the government without the consent of their owner, and which may be lost by reason of their absconding.

As a matter of policy, I think it would be well for the government to pay the expense of recapturing slaves who have, heretofore, escaped, whether in the service of the government, under a contract of hiring or by impressment, unless, in the case of hiring, the risk had been agreed to be incurred by the owner.

In all future cases of hiring, the owner may be well left to protect



himself against the risk of loss by escape, by the terms of his contract of hiring.

In cases of impressment of slaves, and the facilities for escaping being thereby increased, policy would also seem to require that the government should pay to the owner the value of the slave, when escaping to the enemy.

But these are all questions of policy, addressing themselves to the law-making power, and, as Congress is now in session, it will be better to submit them to that body.

In my reply to your communication of the 22d instant, I have already stated the liability of the government for property usually hired or impressed, and that I thought the same rules should, by analogy, be adopted, as to slave property, with, perhaps, the qualification stated.

Further than that, I do not feel prepared to advise the adoption of any rule by your department, but that Congress be requested to legislate on the subject.

I return, herewith, the papers sent me.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,  
(Signed,) THOS. BRAGG.

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(EXHIBIT B.)

CLAIM OF HORACE MITCHELL.

It is shown that the negro slave Monk was impressed, by order of General Magruder, to work on fortifications on the Peninsula. Whilst thus engaged, the negro left, and the presumption is created that he went to the Yankees. It is not, however, made clear that this is so.

At the time this negro was taken, by order of the government, there was no legal authority to take private property for public use. The officer who took the negro, therefore, committed a trespass on the rights of the owner; notwithstanding such officer acted in obedience to orders received from the General commanding the department. The government could not give any legal authority to seize such property, in the absence of congressional authority. None such existed. But the government, in such cases, ought to protect its officers, acting in obedience to orders, especially when the thing used was for the benefit of the government.

The government, for the purpose of this argument, must be supposed to have committed the trespass on the property. The act shows a *conversion* of the negro, and the government is responsible for his safe return to the owner. Even in the case of *hiring* such property, it would be the duty of the bailee to return the property, at the expiration of the term of hiring; if not returned, the only excuse which would prevent liability for the failure to return, would be death, unmixed with neglect on the part of the hiring bailee. Certainly less stringency should not be applied, when the property was seized, without the consent of the owner and placed in the public



works. The owner, if the case was between individuals, might regard the original taking as a conversion, and might maintain trover for the value of property thus taken. I think the owner of the negro, Monk, should not be placed in a worse situation, because the claim is against the government for the damage. The government cannot be sued without its consent, and, for this reason, ought the more readily do justice to its citizens. Besides this, the order issued from the Adjutant General's office, pledges the government to pay for negroes so seized, if they escape to the enemy. I think the claim should be allowed at fifteen hundred dollars.

(Signed,)

T. H. WATTS,  
*Attorney General.*

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, }  
Richmond, Va., November 25, 1861. }

HON. J. P. BENJAMIN,

*Secretary of War :*

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the letter of Colonel A. C. Myers, Quartermaster General, addressed to the Secretary of War, accompanied by accounts of W. F. Fitchue, for arresting fugitive slaves, and of Captain W. J. Marshall, for bringing said slaves eastern shore of Virginia to Gloucester Point, where they had been in the employment of the Government, upon a contract of hiring with the owner, and from which they escaped to the eastern shore. The charge made by Fitchue is the reward allowed by the law of Virginia for the apprehension of fugitive slaves, and their delivery to their owner or agent; and that made by Captain Marshall is what he considers a fair compensation, under the circumstances, for his risk and trouble in returning the slaves to Gloucester Point.

The papers are referred by you to this office, for my opinion as to the liability of the Government.

It seems to be clear that the Government is not legally bound to pay these charges. Legally speaking, it occupies the same relation to the owner of the slaves that any individual hirer would have sustained to him, and, in such case, by the local law, an extract from which is given in the letter of the Quartermaster General, the hirer would not be liable. Similar laws doubtless exist in every State of the Confederacy. It may be said, also, that it was in the power of the owner to protect himself by the terms of the contract of hiring.

It is suggested, in the letter of the Quartermaster General, as a subject worthy of consideration, whether, as a measure of policy, the Government should avail itself of the exemption given by law in this and similar cases. He also refers to cases likely to arise of slaves impressed into the public service by the Government, without the consent of the owner, and which may be lost by reason of their absconding.

As a matter of policy, I think it would be well for the Government to pay the expenses of recapturing slaves who have heretofore escaped, whether in the service of the Government under a contract of hiring, or by impressment, unless in the case of hiring, the risk had been agreed to be incurred by the owner.

In all future cases of hiring, the owner may be well left to protect himself against the risk of loss by escape, by the terms of his contract of hiring.

In cases of impressment of slaves, and the facilities for escaping being thereby increased, policy would also seem to require that the Government should pay to the owner the value of the slave when escaping to the enemy.

But these are all questions of policy, addressing themselves to the law-making power; and, as Congress is now in session, it will be better to submit them to that body.

In my reply to your communication of the 22d instant, I have already stated the liability of the Government for property usually hired or impressed, and that I thought the same rules, should, by analogy, be adopted as to slave property with, perhaps, the qualification stated.

Further than that, I do not feel prepared to advise the adoption of any rule by your Department, but that Congress be requested to legislate on the subject.

I return herewith the papers sent to me.

(Signed,)

THOMAS BRAGG.

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## REPORT OF CHIEF OF BUREAU OF ENGINEERS.

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA,  
*War Department, Engineer Bureau.* }  
 Richmond, Va., March 9th, 1863. }

HON. JAMES A. SEDDON,  
*Secretary of War :*

Sir : In response to the resolution of the House of Representatives, of the 21st ultimo, requesting the President to inform them "whether the government holds, or has at any time held, itself liable for the value of slaves impressed by its authority, and escaping to the enemy, while so impressed; and whether the owners of such slaves have been paid: also, the correspondence, if any, on this subject between the Secretary of War, the Adjutant General, the Quartermaster General, the Engineer Bureau and the Attorney General," I have the honor to report :

1st. That when slaves are received into the service of the Confederate States, under the act of the Virginia Legislature, passed October 3, 1862, the government holds itself liable for the value of those that may escape to the enemy, from "a want of due diligence on the part of the authorities of the Confederate States."

2d. That this bureau has *not* paid the owners, for any slaves that have escaped to the enemy, while employed on works under its direction.

3d. That this Bureau has had *no correspondence* on this subject.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. F. GILMER,

*Colonel Engineers and Chief of Engineer Bureau.*

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL'S OFFICE, }  
Richmond, April 12, 1862. }

The SECRETARY OF WAR:

I respectfully submit the enclosed letter of authority, from the Adjutant and Inspector General, with the following remarks:

The agent thus appointed is authorized to receipt for the slaves he may impress, and from the date of the receipts the government is pledged to be "responsible for the slaves according to the laws of Virginia, with the additional responsibility for their value should they escape to or be injured by the enemy."

I applied to the late Secretary of War for instructions as to the responsibility of the government for the value of the impressed slaves who might be captured. Upon a reference of the question to the Attorney General, he gave an opinion to the effect, that while it was the policy of the government to assume this responsibility, still it was a question of policy which should be submitted to Congress for its action.

This opinion was communicated to me by the Secretary as an answer to my application for instructions. It has, therefore, been regarded as controlling the action of the quartermaster department in such cases.

The letter of the Adjutant General renders it necessary that I should receive instructions, whether I am still to be governed by the opinion of the Attorney General, or shall recognize contracts of indemnity, or insurance to be made by this or other agents, who may receive similar authority. If the latter, I respectfully suggest that some mode of appraisalment of the value of impressed slaves, should be adopted promptly.

(Signed,)

A. C. MYERS,  
*Quartermaster General.*



CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE GOVERNOR OF SOUTH  
CAROLINA AND WAR DEPARTMENT.

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA, }  
*Executive Office,* }  
 Columbia, January 5, 1863. }

To Hon. JAMES A. SEDDON,  
*Secretary of War:*

SIR: I had the honor of transmitting to you on the 30th December, a copy of an act passed by the Legislature of this State, at its recent session, entitled "An Act to organize and supply negro labor for coast defense, in compliance with requisitions of the Confederate government," and of requesting an expression of assent or dissent to the provisions of the said act on the part of the government.

Referring to the third section of the said act, I beg leave to renew the request made in my last communication on this subject, and am,

With great respect, your obedient servant,  
 (Signed,) M. L. BONHAM.

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA, }  
*War Department,* }  
 Richmond, Va., Jan. 8, 1863. }

His Excellency, M. L. BONHAM,  
*Governor of South Carolina, Columbia, S. C.:*

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter enclosing a copy of an act of the Legislature of South Carolina, in reference to the organization of negro labor for coast defence.

The Department considers the proposed system for the employment of slaves well arraigned and judicious, and approves highly of the action of the Legislature; but there is one provision of the law, viz: that which requires payment for slaves who escape to, or are captured by the enemy, with regard to which, the Department does not feel authorized to take any action, as Congress alone can provide for such payment.

With high consideration and regard,  
 Your obedient servant,  
 (Signed,) JAMES A. SEDDON,  
*Secretary of War.*

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA, }  
*Headquarters,* Columbia, January 15, 1863. }

Hon. JAMES A. SEDDON,  
*Secretary of War, Richmond, Va.:*

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of

the 8th instant, in reference to an act of the Legislature, for the supply of negro labor for coast defence.

Please let me know if it is probable Congress will take any action on the subject of payment for slaves who escape to, or are captured by the enemy, as provided in our negro labor act. Is the matter to be brought to their attention.

I am, sir, with great respect, your obedient servant,  
(Signed,) M. L. BONHAM.

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CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA, }  
War Department, }  
Richmond, Va., Jan. 26, 1863. }

His Excellency, M. L. BONHAM,  
*Governor of South Carolina, Columbia, S. C. :*

SIR: I have the honor to inform you that I have submitted to the Military Committee of the House of Representatives, for such action as may be deemed expedient, copies of the act of the Legislature of South Carolina for the supply of negro labor for coast defence, and of the correspondence between your Excellency and the Department on the subject.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,  
(Signed,) JAMES A. SEDDON,  
*Secretary of War.*

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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA, }  
*Headquarters, Columbia, February 8, 1863. }*

Hon. JAMES A. SEDDON,  
*Secretary of War:*

SIR: I have the honor to enclose a copy of the act amending the negro labor law, of December, waiving the condition of the first.

On your assent to the other terms of the act, which please signify at once, I will have the labor which General Beauregard requires, furnished as soon as possible.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,  
(Signed,) M. L. BONHAM.

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AN ACT to amend an act, entitled "an act to organize and supply negro labor for coast defence, in compliance with requisitions of the government of the Confederate States; and to authorize and direct the Governor to proceed to furnish negro labor under said act.

SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives, now met and sitting in General Assembly, and by the authority of the same,* That an act, entitled "an act to organize and supply negro

labor for coast defence, in compliance with requisitions of the government of the Confederate States," passed on the 18th day of December, Anno Domini, eighteen hundred and sixty-two, be, and the same is hereby amended, and that the State agent, appointed under the fourth section of said act, shall have the power, and is hereby authorized to appoint, with the approval of the Governor, such number of assistant agents as, in his judgment, may be necessary to enable him to execute the provisions of the sixth section of said act, and as a compensation for their services while so employed, they shall be entitled to receive two dollars per diem.

SEC. 2. That the eleventh section of said act be so amended, that instead of the fines and penalties therein imposed upon such owners of slaves as shall neglect or refuse to send their slaves, according to the requirements of said act, such defaulters shall be liable to a fine of one and a half dollars per diem for each slave, for the time they shall be liable to send such slaves, to be imposed and collected by the commissioners of roads in the district where such default has been made, in the manner now provided by law for default in the performance of said duty.

SEC. 3. That the Governor be, and is hereby authorized and directed to proceed to furnish negro labor to the Confederate government under said act, notwithstanding said government has not, through the proper officer, authorized thereto, assented and agreed to the provisions contained in said act, declaring said government liable to the owner for any loss or damage of or to the slave or slaves, during his or their service: *Provided, however,* That the State does not by this act waive the right to insist upon such liability, as well as all the provisions of said act, and the amendments thereto, and he is hereby directed to take such proceedings as he may deem necessary and proper, to bring said provisions to the notice of the Congress of the Confederate States, and procure their assent to all its terms and conditions.

In the Senate House the 6th day of February, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in the eighty-seventh year of the sovereignty and independence of the State of South Carolina.

(Signed,)

M. D. PORTER, *President of Senate.*

(Signed,)

A. P. ALDRUT, *Speaker of House of Rep.*

I certify that the foregoing is a correct copy of the act now on file in the Secretary of State's office.

(Signed,)

B. F. ARTHUR.

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA,  
*War Department,*  
 Richmond, Va., February 14, 1863. }

His Excellency, M. L. BONHAM,

*Governor of South Carolina, Columbia, S. C.,*

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 8th inst., enclosing a copy of the act of the South Carolina



Legislature, amending the negro labor law, passed in December, and waiving the condition in the first act.

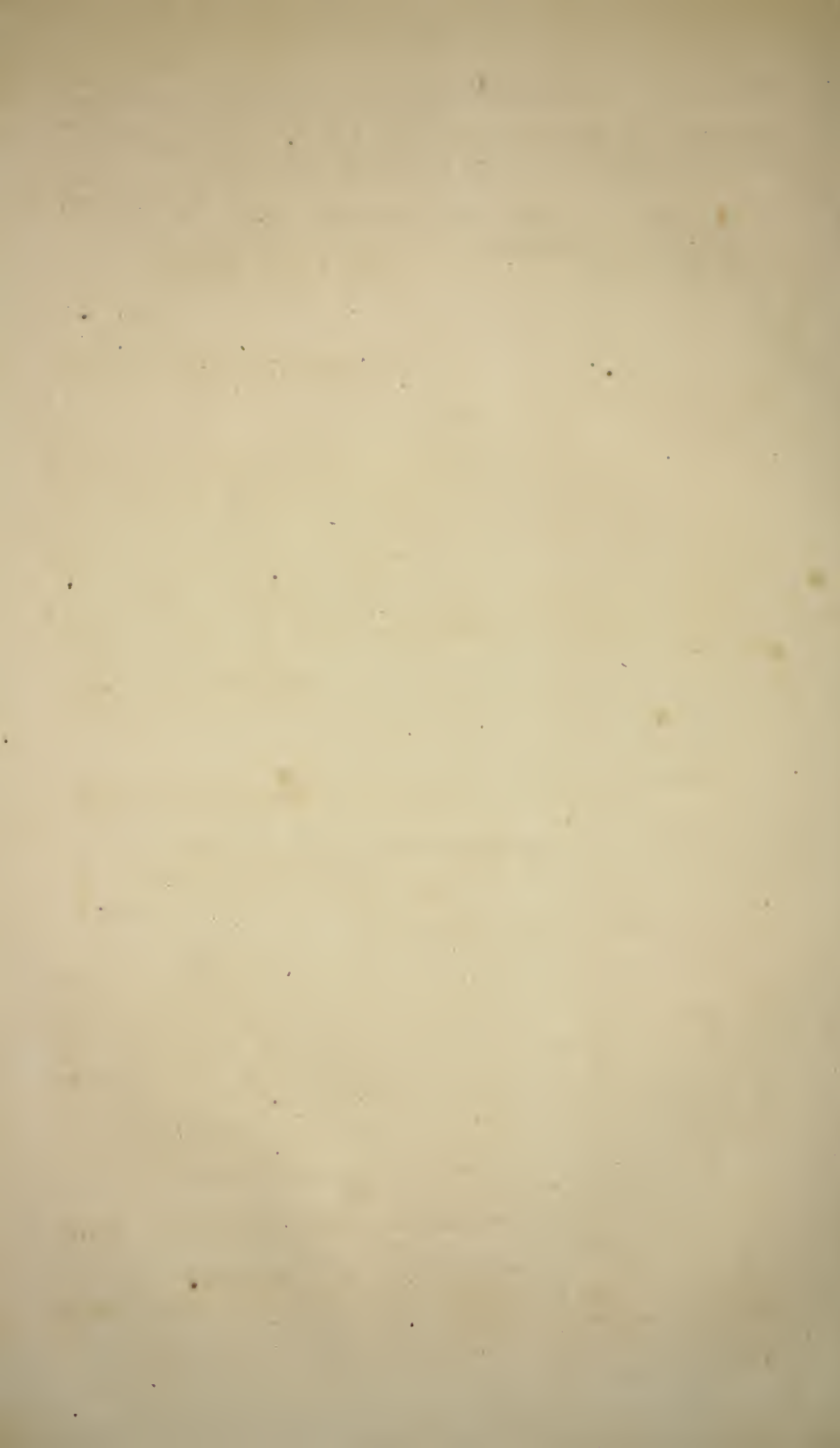
The department is much gratified by the prompt and satisfactory action of the Legislature, and hereby signifies its acceptance of the law as now passed.

With high regard and respect, your obedient servant,

(Signed,)

JAMES A. SEDDON,  
*Secretary of War.*







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